

Historic, Archive Document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

A275.2
F312F

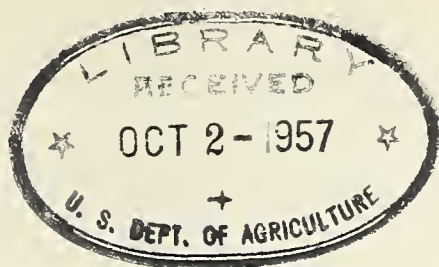
UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
LIBRARY



BOOK NUMBER

931953

A275.2
F312F



F A R M A N D H O M E V I S I T S

K. F. Warner
Federal Extension Service
U. S. Department of Agriculture

A Training Leaflet in Eight Parts

CONTENTS

- | | |
|--|-------------------|
| 1. Case descriptions for group discussion. | Parts I, III, VI |
| 2. Suggestions for discussion leader. | Parts II, IV, VII |
| 3. Partial summaries. | Parts V, VIII |

It is suggested that usable parts be separated
and mimeographed locally in the quantities needed



FARM AND HOME VISITS
A Training Leaflet

PART I

There have been many times in your experience when only a personal visit would do the job. These were situations that demanded a face-to-face discussion. Mostly you have handled those conversations effectively, though sometimes you felt you had floundered. Often you have "stolen" the time it took to make that visit, but always you have wished you could squeeze in more of them. Why does such a useful teaching tool have to consume so much time?

Visits, of course, do not take more time than other methods of teaching. They often take less time to create understanding and acceptance than almost any other approach. The trouble is they reach only one person or one family. Extension's assignment is to reach them all.

Our job, our extension problem, is to fit effective visits into a plan of work that makes the best use of them; a plan that uses visits to unlock a door; to propagate interneighbor visits; to promote the line fence, teacup discussions that develop public approval and lead to action.

We, ourselves, don't have to make all the visits, if the ones we make are good ones.

Let's take a good look at visits. Or rather - let's take two good looks. First, how do we make an effective visit? And second, how do we fit visits into a total teaching program. By total we mean sound, persistent, inescapable - the kind that helps neighbors to discuss, consider, and act.

What Makes an Effective Visit

One of the advantages of a good visit is the opportunity that each person has to contribute. Only in special cases does one person tell and the other listen. Usually the participants are "partners." Each one helps the other to discover or rediscover or, perhaps, uncover the solution or the route toward the solution. Let's use that same process here.

There follows a description of an imagined visit. The first part is background only. It stops at the screen door. Using the give-and-take technique of visits, can you uncover the way or ways you think that visit should have been conducted? What do you think took place when the agent entered that home? How would you have handled it?

Helen Prepares to Visit Mrs. Jepson

Helen Cather, Home Agent, lifted her foot from the accelerator and let her car roll slowly down the dusty road. Only six miles more to the Jepson farm and she was still undecided as to how to start her scheduled visit with Mrs. Jepson on budgets.

Helen was worried, uneasy about this call. Mrs. Jepson had had only infrequent, casual contacts with extension activities—most of her neighbors were the same way—reserved, reluctant, even skeptical. The small farms, the limited incomes, the numerous children seemed to cry for a neighborhood effort to make the best of what they had, but neither Helen nor the other extension workers had ever been successful in interesting them or really getting acquainted. Nice folks, too, but they seemed to set themselves apart. Helen wondered again where she had failed.

This call on Mrs. Jepson was largely an accident. Mrs. Jepson, driving into town last week, had had a flat. Helen, coming along behind, had stopped to see if she could help. Then, while a gallant passer-by had removed the ruined tire and put on the well worn spare, Mrs. Jepson had lamented freely on the task of stretching income to cover both expenses and emergencies. Helen had confessed that that was a universal problem. She told briefly, but enthusiastically, of her own start in that direction. Mrs. Jepson, deep in her current trouble, had reached for a helping hand. Therefore this scheduled trip to the Jepson farm on budgets, the planned use of the money available.

Helen wondered if Mrs. Jepson still was interested in budgets. What kind of reception would she receive today? What would be the best way to start? Thirteen year old Jimmy Jepson's arrest last night with the gang of dice-rolling town sports was mostly the result of his misdirected effort to grow up, but the sheriff had not liked it. Jimmy's escapade was hardly a good prelude to a talk with Mrs. Jepson on family budgets—yet Jimmy's problem was a result of budgets or, rather, of no budgets, Helen reasoned.

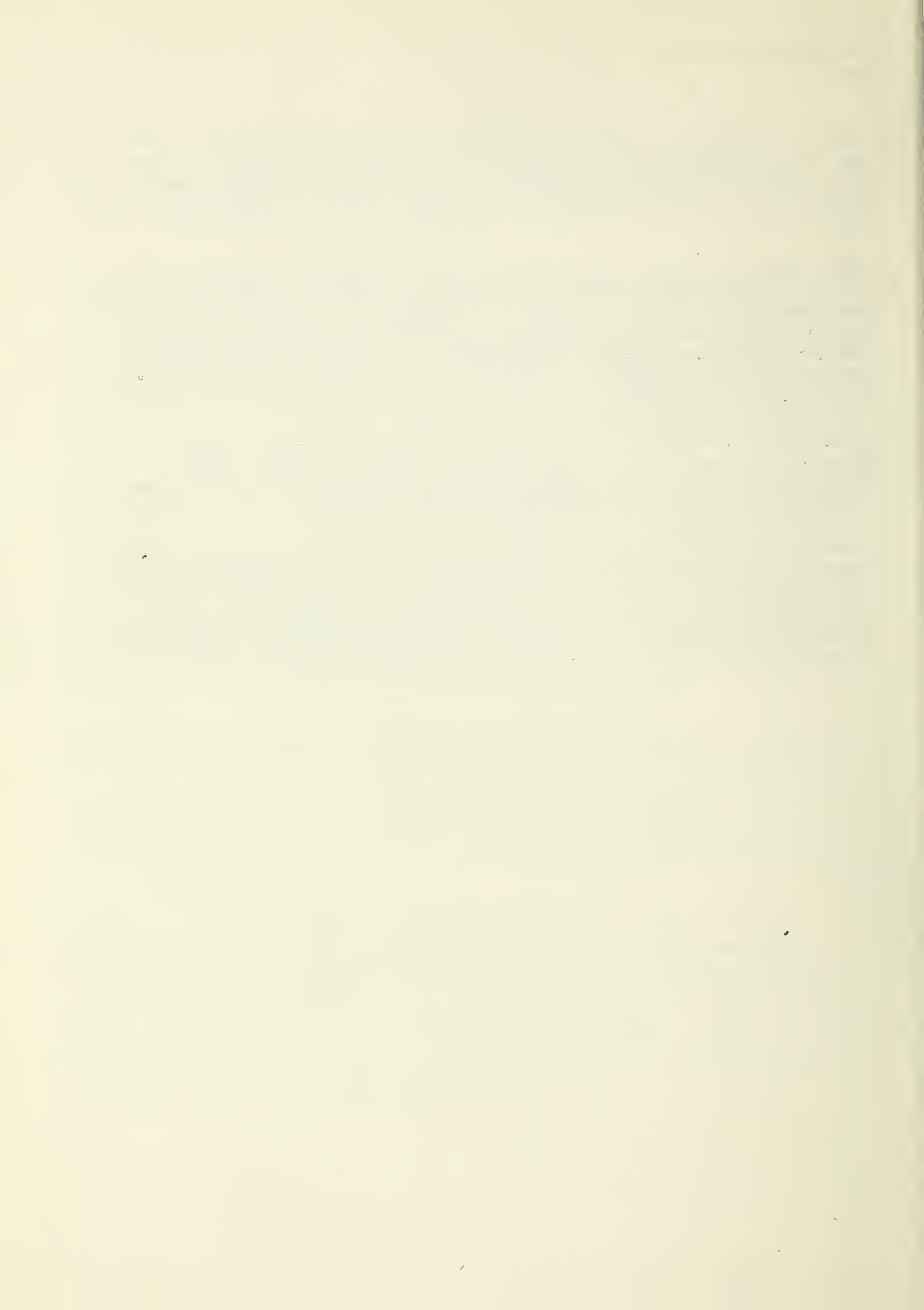
The car coasted past Lonnie Johnson's poultry farm. Lonnie, ex-local pitching star, ex-jet pilot, was now a poultryman who had a way with both chickens and some ten 4-H Club kids. Could that club be extended to the Jepson area, Helen mused? How a man like Lonnie could help Jimmy! Poor Jimmy—a good kid, active, eager, but apparently bored to death. Without a real place on that small Jepson farm, Jimmy had sought some activity and new experiences in town. He'd found his new experiences, surely, but this time with the sheriff. If only he had had something he liked to do at home.

Jimmy's two sisters crossed Helen's mind. They could be problems, too. Sue, the ten-year-old, might still be just an eager kid, but the older girl, Mary, was fourteen. Clothes and boys could be very important at that age. Problems? Possibly. On the other hand, how might they help?

Helen touched the gas lightly and pulled her mind back to Mrs. Jepson and her limited income. That new dress Mrs. Jepson had worn at church last Sunday was a dream. She wished she had one as nice. Mrs. Jepson took real pleasure in nice clothes. Bought them, too, even if they cost more than she apparently should pay. Now Jimmy was added to the problem of the lean Jepson pocketbook. The car moved toward the final turn to the Jepson farm.

Across the creek Helen saw Mr. Jepson plowing. His tractor loomed large in that small field. The tractor's smooth, rhythmic exhaust reminded her that her car needed tuning. She wondered what Mr. Jepson thought of budgets or of home agents visiting his wife.

Suddenly Helen stepped hard on the gas. The car gave a surprised cough, jumped, then hurried down the road. She had it—the answer, the combination—Jimmy, the dress, the unmade budget. Fixing one would help fix the others. They had to. She couldn't miss. Or could she? Helen parked her car beside the pump, picked up her record books, greeted the friendly dog, and saw Mrs. Jepson waiting behind the screen door.



PART II

Before the Door Opens

(Suggestions for the discussion leader)

Before we open that door it should be helpful to review the facts as these two women see them. What are the differences, the barriers, and what are the points of common interest?

Mrs. Jepson is in trouble. In a distressed moment with a flat tire, she let herself in for a visit from this heard-about, but almost unknown, home agent. Her crowded house and Jimmy's trouble combine to make her a bit reluctant to have Helen call. She has her pride; she must maintain her dignity. She feels tense, embarrassed. What thoughts would be running through her mind? What would she be saying to herself?

1. "What will this trained woman think of me, my crowded house, the hole in the living room rug?"
2. "She saw my new dress last Sunday. What will she think when she sees these broken shades and battered water bucket?"
3. "Wonder if she's heard about Jimmy's trouble? That would have to happen at this time."
4. "Budgets! How can you have one when you have nothing to budget? I let myself in for this."
5. "Here she comes. Wish the girls were here. I'll have to see it through alone. Be nice, tell her little. Maybe she won't stay long."

What would you be thinking and how would you start if you were Mrs. Jepson? Will Mrs. Jepson's greeting be a casual, "Hello Miss Cather. Nice day, isn't it? Come right in." Or, thinking of Jimmy's trouble, will she explode with: "You're just like everybody else. A bunch of crows. As soon as someone gets in trouble you all flock in to hear the details and pick the bones."

Yet underneath, what does this woman really want? What does she yearn for?

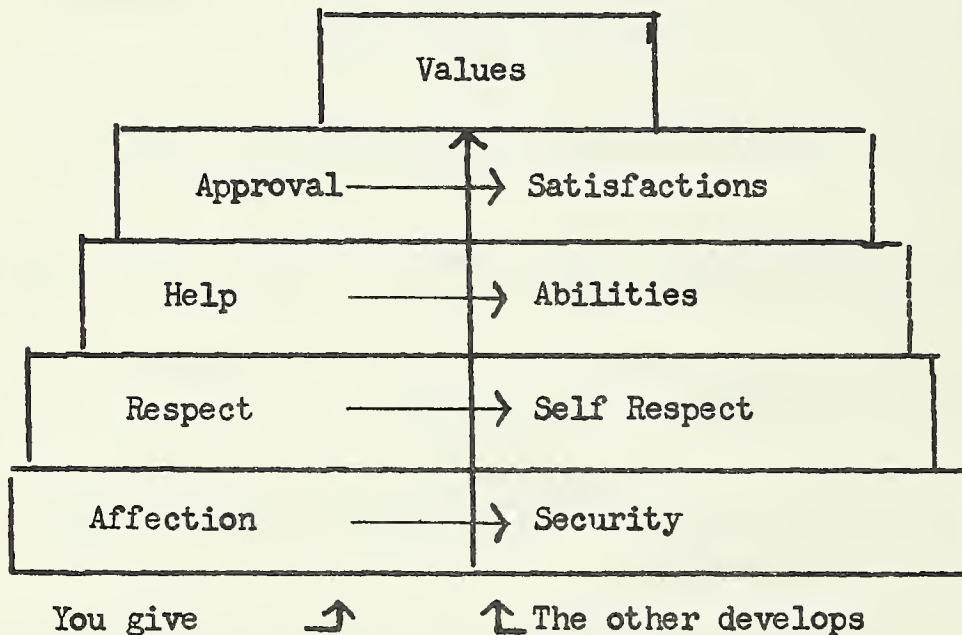
Helen Cather, Home Agent, wants to be of help. She hopes she understands Mrs. Jepson's situation but is uncertain of her reception and not too sure about her best approach.

Helen could guess that she will have to play "by ear." Her job will be to develop a harmonious "duet," whether Mrs. Jepson starts with melody or discord, whether she chooses "rhythmic time" or "syncopation." From her experience, Helen can recall two rules of "harmony"—human relations harmony. Those two rules are:

1. There are reasons, good reasons, for every situation.
2. The extension job is to discover, understand, accept and analyze those reasons; not to judge, criticize, or sugar coat.

Unknown to herself, Helen has learned some other rules. She would not recognize the summary of these rules, but she would approve them. That summary forms the steps by which one person builds up a good relationship with another; by which a visit can be made effective.

Building Good Human Relationship 1/



Helen had never seen that summary. Let's see how well she followed it.

1/ Adapted from Ethel Waring, Retired Professor of Child Development and Family Relationships, Cornell University.

PART III

One Possible Outcome of the Jepson-Cather Visit

The lengthening shadows from the March sun stretched across the river and, unnoticed, covered Helen's busy pen. Alone in this little park she sat beside the wheel recording the details of this afternoon's visit with Mrs. Jepson. Away from the insistent phone and busy typewriter, she wrote down what had been and what she hoped would be.

The beginning of that visit had been stormy, even tearful. "Jimmy arrested. Jimmy was a good boy. Never in trouble before. Disgrace the family. Spoil his life and ours." Helen had listened, comforted, and let the storm die down. Then:

"Mrs. Jepson, Jimmy is a proud boy. He likes to do things--be important, different. That's what he was trying to do in town. He just used poor judgment. He's all right. We really are to blame. Our job is to keep him busy and important here--where he won't make mistakes. What can he do on this farm that will make him proud?"

With slow and careful questioning by Helen, Mrs. Jepson had described the farm, the home, the family habits, and the family wants. It was a small farm with more equipment and family labor than were used profitably. Helen could see the need for more productive cropland, milk cows, chickens, a garden, and better management, but she held her peace.

The family was a problem, too, so Mrs. Jepson said. Each member had his own special wants and each strained against the restrictions of their small income.

"I like good clothes," Mrs. Jepson finally confessed. "Seems like a new dress makes me forget my work and troubles. I know I should not have bought that last one, but I did."

Helen stopped rocking. Then quietly, "New dresses do that for me, too. I'm glad you have it. I hope you will have another one later on. Our job is to figure out how to do it. That's your job and mine, and Jimmy's, and the rest of the family's. Mrs. Jepson, how much did that last dress cost?"

From there it had been two women's heads together, asking questions, writing down answers, adding, considering, and deciding. It was Mrs. Jepson who added up the money spent for food and expressed her horrified amazement at the total. "Gracious, Miss Helen, all that money for food and we are living on a farm."

It was Helen who figured the number of hours each week that Jimmy and his two sisters had nothing much to do around the place. But it was Mrs. Jepson who put those two totals together and came up fast with, "Vegetables, a milk cow, chickens, and flowers." Then her enthusiasm had faded--she had slumped back in her chair.

"No use, Miss Helen, no use. I think Dad would agree, especially since Jimmy's trouble, but he's not much for hoeing gardens and fussing with chickens. His chief interest is in crops. Top of that, Jimmy's not so keen on chores anyhow. More chores won't fill Jimmy with pride and make him feel important. Like as not if we get some chickens Jimmy'll spend all his spare time in town."

Helen Cather, Home Agent, smiled happily as she closed her notebook and gazed across the river in the gathering dusk. She had known that Lonnie Johnson liked poultry and boys but she had not known how the boys idolized Lonnie. She could still see Jimmy's glum face when he came home from school. How it had changed when she mentioned 4-H, poultry, and Lonnie Johnson. Sheriffs were forgotten. "Some real hens of my own; to be a pal to Lonnie; to be a part of those 4-H meetings. Maybe Tommy could join, too. Wow!"

Helen knew that first enthusiasm would fade, but she felt a sustained interest could be fostered. Mrs. Jepson's words kept ringing in her ears. "Gracious, Miss Helen, all that money for food and we are living on a farm."

Suddenly Helen discovered that she was hungry. Tonight, she decided, as she started the car, it would be fried chicken.

PART IV

Discussion of the Jepson Visit

(Suggestions for the discussion leader)

In our discussion of how this visit might start, we guessed that Mrs. Jepson might be worried about the appearance of her house, the hole in the carpet, the battered water bucket. She might have been, of course, but in this writeup we find her thoughts centered on what? Does that seem normal, natural for a mother? Might we have expected that?

What was Helen's response to this explosive concern about Jimmy? Did she follow or violate the rules of good human relations?

When Helen did talk, her first words were in support of Jimmy. Suppose she had said, "Boys will be boys, you know. Jimmy'll grow out of it." Or suppose her comment had been: "Kids do such terrible things these days. I don't know what we are coming to."

The goal was mutual understanding, respect, and acceptance that would lead to a frank discussion of Mrs. Jepson's problems. At the start Mrs. Jepson had no intention of describing the intimate details of her home. Yet she did. Why did she? As that description of the farm and home poured out, Helen was bursting with suggestions, ideas, desirable improvements. Yet—"she held her peace." Why? Was it a good idea?

There came the time when Helen did not hold her peace. She asked a question, a very personal question. She asked, "Mrs. Jepson, how much did that dress cost?"

One could imagine that Helen had no intention of asking the cost of that dress when the visit started. She would have felt that such a question was noseey, impertinent. Yet finally she asked it. Why did Helen feel she should ask such a personal question? How did she have the nerve? What was the result? Would you have done what Helen did here? Why?



PART V

Key Visits

It is easier to write a happy ending than to produce one. But before we leave the Jepson farm, let's take a quick look into the future. Helen used most of an afternoon on that call. If the time was well spent, there has to be a future to it. It has to be a key visit, one that will unlock some doors. There will have to be more contacts, more visits.

As Helen drove home that March evening she looked forward eagerly to the next conference of their county extension staff. How pleased they all would be when they learned about this entering wedge into that hard-to-reach community! Maybe they could have a special conference tomorrow. They really must if they are to get Jimmy back on the right track.

Jimmy, poor kid. How his eyes had sparkled when he had exclaimed, "Some real hens of my own!" How fortunate the 4-H agent knew both Lonnie and the sheriff. Where would Sue and Mary fit in? Garden? Sewing? Dancing? Might need a new 4-H Club in that community. That could take time and work.

Mrs. Jepson--she should work in smoothly, Helen mused, especially with warmhearted Mrs. Wilson as chairman of the neighboring homemakers club. Give Mrs. Jepson a taste of it to start. And the sewing machine clinic was coming up next month. A special clinic at the Jepson's might interest her neighbors.

The suburbs of the County Seat slipped past Helen in the twilight. Mr. Jepson, Helen thought, so far he was the big unknown. His interest was essential, quite essential. How the Ag agent will smile when he hears about this. Those anemic cornfields in that area had bothered him for a long time. Maybe the entree to Mr. Jepson would be corn; maybe custom plowing; maybe Mrs. Jepson; maybe it will be Jimmy. But there has to be an entree to him. There will be, too, when we three agents get to working on it.

The lights of a large roadside sign spelled out "Chicken in the Rough." Helen slowed and stopped her car.

The Followup

Whatever specific plans developed next morning in that county extension office would have to be fitted to the people, soil, crops, customs, and urgencies of the local situation. Those three extension workers would be much more capable of choosing and adapting than anybody else.

Regardless of the tentative one, or two, or three-year sequence of approaches that extension staff selects, there are some facts about neighborhood activities that we hope will not be overlooked.

As things begin to happen on the Jepson farm, the Jepsons will become a target. The curious neighbors will ask Mr. Jepson, "What's going on at your place? Seems like you're getting fancy notions. Trying to go highbrow on us?" Mr. Jepson must be able to answer clearly, convincingly, and with pride. He must be able to explain and even brag a little. The family wants to be able to defend itself. Extension wants it to pass on sound information. The local grapevine will soon be buzzing and it is essential that these interneighbor visits be informed and useful. Neighborhood visits multiply rapidly.

There is another thing we hope that county staff will not forget. Contact with the Jepsons was quite by accident. The Jepsons may not be the existing natural leaders in the neighborhood. If community interest and support is to develop, the community, and its leaders, must have a part in shaping that program. The same human touch that opened the Jepson door will be needed to broaden the base of operations in the neighborhood.

PART VI

The Agricultural Agent Sees an Opportunity

The example used, so far, has centered on the home agent. As a change of pace, there follows the description of an incident that could have happened to Helen's partner, Joe Bailey, the agricultural agent.

The Jepson family and the Jepson community are used again. They are the same kind of people described before, but this time there is no Lonnie Johnson, or sheriff, or flat tire, or previous visit by the home agent. Use only the background information that follows as you decide what plans the county extension office should make and how Joe Bailey should handle a key visit with Mr. Jepson.

Jim Bailey Attends a Farm Sale

Rain had made the crowd bigger than expected at this emergency, mid-summer farm sale. Joe Bailey, County Agent, was having trouble locating the committee men he had come to see. The auctioneer was doing his best to dispose of a heavy roller for packing soil. Finally--"Going-Going-Sold!--to Mr. Jepson. The next lot will be a wagon with a grain tight box."

Joe postponed his search for committee men as he watched Mr. Jepson make a more careful inspection of the packer he had just bid in. A packer, Joe mused. What use did Jepson have for that on his hard clay soil? What his fields needed was loosening up. You couldn't hitch cloverseed behind his oversize tractor, but cloverseed would do that well-scrubbed soil more good than a packer. Well--it was his business. Some folks collected stamps or shotguns. Others went in for machinery.

Joe drove home through the Jepson community. The short, yellowish corn, the hard, hostile soil, the lean-to type houses did not go with big tractors and packers. Joe wondered if they did go with reluctant, hard-to-talk-to people. Where had he failed?

Joe stopped his car on the bridge over the creek. He sat for a moment, watching the muddy flood from the daylong rain pour by. Here's where our downstream troubles start, he thought. His eyes roved the nearby slopes. Corn, corn, corn. Corn so short he could see the little rivers between the rows hurrying their loads of silt to the main stream.

Guess that's why Jepson bought the packer. Going to try and pack it down so it won't wash off. What he needs is a two-way plow for contour farming or to throw up some terraces, or a power scoop to fill in those gullies and build a few small dams. That would test out his fancy tractor. Might even use his newly purchased packer to firm 'em up.

Joe Bailey, County Agent, was half a mile beyond the bridge before the idea hit him. He set his jaw and brakes at the same time. His car slewed into a half turn in the mud but he never knew he had bitten his lip.

Sure! Why didn't I think of it before. Dumbbell! Of course that's the way. Jepson's nuts about machinery. Got more of it than he uses. Keeps it in good shape, too. Swings a mean monkey wrench. Good machinery and someone who can handle it is what we need here. Jepson could build those dams and terraces if he would. Make some extra money for his dressy wife. Give his restless kid Jimmy something new to do and think about. Hold some of that fertilizer 'til the corn can use it. Get him proud of a well-made waterway; he might even plant clover to hold it. That new man on the farm at the head of the creek would be interested. Wonder what the other neighbors would think? Wonder how you'd interest Mr. Jepson?

The yellowish cornfields along the road seemed to mock Joe as he drove slowly through the mud. How would you interest Mr. Jepson? He turned onto the black top and pointed the car towards home.

PART VII

How Would You Interest Mr. Jepson?

(Suggestions for the Discussion Leader)

What thoughts do you guess went through Joe Bailey's mind as he drove back to the office? Suppose we list a few. They should suggest others. Joe thought to himself:

1. The folks on the bottom land and in the village would certainly like to see this creek slowed down. Must talk to them.
2. SCS has made a start down there. Have to see them right away. SCS'd have to help up here, too. Bet they've got some plans and estimates already.
3. Wonder if SCS could make a deal and hire Jepson to move that dirt?
4. Wonder if Jepson would do it?
5. Jepson—he's a toughie. Helen might have ideas. Wonder if Jimmy has ever touched 4-H? Can't crowd 'em. The side door approach might be the best.
6. How do you make soil and water control interesting? Show him that movie, "Raindrops and Soil Erosion." Let him see the "atomic" splash of the raindrop. He wouldn't come to see it.
7. Machinery—that's his soft spot. Possibilities for earning off-farm money sitting on his tractor.
8. The hand level. Only costs \$1.50. Show him how to use it. Find the route for his tractor.
9. Contour plowing. Jepson could do that. Save 10% power, less gas. Water soak in 10% more—crop yields 10% up. That ought to interest him if I ever could get him to listen.
10. Bet his sod-covered fence rows have more top soil than his cornfield. Might interest him.
11. Retaining dam--water reserve. Cut fire insurance premium. Fishing for Jimmy. Maybe the old man likes to fish, too. Nearby water for his cattle.

12. Grassed-in overflows. Like gutters and downspouts on his house. Get him proud of a well-packed waterway; he might sow some clover on it.
13. Well packed soil-packer--money to own and run his machinery. Guess that's the place to start with Jepson. Pride in what he does with that machinery will come later.

What would be your thoughts, your alternatives, your conclusions if you were driving down that black top toward your office? You take it from here. What plan of work would be the best? What key visits should be made? How would you interest Mr. Jepson?

PART VIII

Summary

Your countywide run of face-to face discussions, on-the-spot examinations, will be of many kinds. Most of them will have less emotional background than the ones just described. For example, there will be the couple with red spider in the shrubs; the man whose corn is turning yellow; the boy whose 4-H calf is doing poorly; the folks who want to remodel a barn or kitchen; the local leader who needs encouragement or the one from whom you need advice. You will approach these visits with less apprehension than Helen Cather or Joe Bailey but you will be guided by the same procedures they used.

1. You will be expected, and you will arrive on time (or almost on time).
2. You will notice and show your appreciation of something that belongs to them--a new house, a newly opened flower, a friendly dog.
3. You will ask questions that help folks analyze their situation. You will do a surprising amount of listening--attentive listening.
4. You will understand--accept, not judge or criticize. When they involve you in discussing their mistakes, you will discuss them as though you both were sinners.
5. You will be patient, sometimes slow. You will remember that most of us make progress one idea at a time; that we learn only when we are ready to learn. Crowding or hurrying may overwhelm or scare us.
6. You will use no "why doncha's." It is relatively easy to see improvements that can be made on any farm or in any home. It is easy to ask, "Why doncha lime?" (Or spray? Or remodel?) What are your feelings when someone asks you, "Why doncha wash your car?" (Or go to bed early? Or clean up your office? Or read a book?) We all react the same way to personal "why doncha's."
7. You will supply some facts that help discover the alternatives. Where are the possible locations for the kitchen sink? What feeds could be used to cut the cost? Who is available as 4-H leader?
8. You will help each member of the family (or group) to consider the wants and needs of others as they choose among alternatives.

9. As you move along the path that leads to a decision you will keep your hosts in front. You will help them compare the alternatives, but the discovery of the answer will be theirs.
10. You will support and compliment their progress toward their goal.
11. You will hold all personal information in strict confidence.
12. As you record this visit and write down the possibilities of the individual or family, you will remember the wise advice of Lyman Bryson, "Look not for excellent persons but for excellence in all persons."

Each Night As You Look Back

When you are back in the office recording the activities of your day, how do you feel about your visits?

Every farm family wants to feel that it is moving toward the security, prestige, and service that we all desire. When you drove away did you leave those people with a clear understanding of the next step that they can take, with you, along that road? Did you leave them with enthusiasm for this added effort?

Did your local leaders know that you were calling in their neighborhood? Often they can prepare the way or handle the follow up. Sometimes they can go along. Always they enjoy being remembered and considered.

Your file shows two previous calls at this same farm. Do these calls add up or were they hit and miss? Are you making progress or merely working hard?

How do you feel about it?

FARM AND HOME VISIT RECORD

You may not fill this out in full, but read it over anyway. It might suggest some possibilities that you could put on a card.

<u>Farm of</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Phone</u>	<u>Date</u>
----------------	----------------	--------------	-------------

<u>Members of family</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Special interest</u>
--------------------------	------------	-------------------------

I. Objectives.

1. What I planned to do.
2. What we accomplished.
3. Future action we agreed to take.

II. Farm and home situation.

1. Special problems of:
 - a. Family.
 - b. Farm and home operations.
 - c. Neighborhood.

- III.
1. Possibilities for participation or leadership in homemaking, agricultural, or youth activities.
 2. Possibilities for a demonstration, meeting, tour stop, farm and home development family.
 3. Could a local leader have made this visit? Or helped? Or handle the followup?
 4. Will this visit stimulate useful discussion among the neighbors?
 5. Was this visit convenient for the family, timely, of proper length, enjoyable?
 6. Suggestions to yourself from yourself.

